GMAP: Taking the Guesswork Out of Governing

The words "data," "accountability" and "performance" might not grab your attention – but what if they led to faster rescues of abused and neglected children in Washington?

What if state government managers, with a few clicks of a mouse, could summon real-time data to determine, for example, if Child Protective Services workers were meeting deadlines to investigate reports of abuse and neglect not just this week or month, but today? What if daily or weekly numbers could be called up on computer screens to show just how well the Department of Labor and Industries is helping injured workers get back on the job?

Governor Christine Gregoire wants a system in which that kind of information not only exists, but is available whenever managers need it. She wants a system in which managers can be held accountable based on real information – real numbers – to measure the performances of the employees they supervise.

She calls the system GMAP, or Government Management, Accountability and Performance, and its creation is already under way. The idea isn't new. Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani pioneered a similar system to determine daily crime patterns and deploy cops to respond to them. Crime rates fell dramatically. Baltimore copied and broadened the system to all its city services with the result that service delivery improved at less cost.

New York City's experience is instructive. For years, the police and elected officials had tried various ways to get ahead of crime before it happened and respond better when it did. For years, they looked at the number of 911 calls and other contacts from citizens in each precinct to determine how to deploy police.

But New York City's version of GMAP quickly discovered that the police were looking at the wrong numbers. Total calls and contacts told the police little. What they needed was a break-down on the *types* of calls and exactly *where* in each precinct they were occurring. For example, how many of the calls were for rape or arson or burglary? Were they occurring in a particular area? On a particular block? Was there a sudden surge of crime under way in a particular area today?

Once the police had set up a computerized system to evaluate calls using that kind of criteria, they were able to see on a daily basis what was developing, or already happening, block by block, precinct by precinct through the whole city.

GMAP will give the citizens a clear, concise view of how government programs are working and whether citizens are receiving value for their tax dollars.

Governor Gregoire will use GMAP to require her Cabinet to:

- Take personal responsibility and be accountable for results.
- Allocate resources according to the most important priorities.
- Use the most effective strategies.
- Base decisions on accurate, up-to-date information.
- Persist and follow up until we achieve results.
- Eliminate programs or concepts that don't work or are ineffective.

With the data, organized on electronic maps, the police could look at an area and conclude that burglars were active in that area, or that a rapist was on the loose and redeploy police from less active areas to blanket the problem area with investigators and police on the beat.

What New York City learned is that asking the right questions combined with the power of computers can lead to tremendous improvements in delivering services to citizens.

Governor Gregoire knows a good thing when she sees it, and she wants an even broader system across state government. She wants and will have a system in which information now sitting in databases from the Department of Health to the Department of Employment Security will be merged and used when appropriate to measure how well the agencies are fulfilling their missions. In cases where new data is needed, it will be created.

GMAP will provide a forum where agency directors report regularly to the Governor on the most important management and policy challenges. The dialogue between the Governor and the agency directors will be honest and direct, and decisions will be based on thoughtful analysis of real data and evidence about what strategies work best.

Based on this data and evidence, GMAP reports will focus on performance in measurable terms, giving citizens a way to judge the effectiveness of government.